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Camporee pathfinders chop their hair for kids in need

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Aug 10, 2024

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Etta Pagett and her mom, Penny Pagett, hug after Etta Pagett's haircut for Wigs for Kids at True Colors on Wednesday in Gillett. News Record Photo/Susan Monaghan

About 45 Pathfinders visited True Colors' cosmetology school on Wednesday to have their hair cut for Wigs for Kids, a nonprofit organization that creates wigs for children dealing with hair loss.

Kids as young as 7 signed up to get their hair cut. Mae Huson, owner of True Colors, said that Pathfinder organizers told her several past Camporees have had hair donation events, and that some Pathfinders grow their hair for the five years between Camporees specifically for donation.

"(They) called around to other schools, and they just didn't have the time or availability," Huson said. "It was a great add for our curriculum, because part of what we do teach is to network and be a part of the community."

Huson said the Pathfinders planned to come in every hour until 5 p.m. to get their hair cut. Six True Colors cosmetology students in the hair cutting portion of their education have been dedicated to the effort.

Penny Pagett, a 50-year-old Pathfinder from the New York conference, took her 9-year-old daughter Etta Pagett to donate 12 inches of hair. Penny said that Etta has been talking about donating her hair since she was 3 years old.

"She was in a Christian preschool. There was a girl there who was the daughter of the preacher, and she was born without hair," Penny said. "She said, 'I want to give (Maizie) some of my hair.'"

Etta understands her hair won't be going to her childhood friend, but was still excited about the opportunity to have her hair donated while attending Camporee. Her stick-straight hair was cut up to the top of her neck. She said that not only did it feel good to donate, but that she "wasn't scared" during the haircut.

"I want her to feel like she has autonomy at this point, and she's said to me repeatedly, 'Mom, it'll grow back'" Penny said. "And she's doing it for a great cause, I wouldn't want to dampen that spirit at all."

Adults with the Pathfinders were also donating their hair. Josie Bautista, a 53-year-old from the British Columbia conference, had 14 inches of hair cut Wednesday morning. Bautista said that as a health care worker for elderly patients, it was important for her to be able to help out kids in need.

“Hair is a big deal for everyone,” Bautista said. “They don’t want to get out of their rooms, they don’t want to get out of the house.”

Bautista said that having “just a couple of wigs, for parties, for going out and doing things out of the house,” makes a huge difference for a kid’s quality of life.

Huson said that she was happy to be able to staff the Wigs for Kids haircuts at her cosmetology school for the Pathfinders, and that they’ve been a big help during the event. They even footed the bill for the staff’s lunch — from Domino’s, after a vote.

“I think that they’re bringing such a unique aspect to this town,” Huson said. “I think it’s going to help our town ... There’s really only 2% of people who are negative, and we just have to be positive.”

Susan Monaghan